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#### TITO CUTS OFF COMINFORM AIRLIFT TO ALBANIA

Vienna -- Information from Belgrade today that the Yugoslav government has forbidden all flights by Cominform country aircraft over Yugoslav territory is regarded as an important step in the isolation of Albania.

The information from Belgrade points out that the ban will be effective from 1 February 1950 to mid-March because the agreements between Yugoslavia and the Cominform countries on overhead flights have not been renewed. Hungary's privilege of operating an air route from Budapest to Tirana by way of Belgrade expires on 18 February, and a similar agreement with Czechoslovakia for flights from Prague expires on 14 March.

The Budapest - Tirana air route is believed to have become, since last spring, a sort of airlift for freight of great importance to Albania. As soon as the Tito government saw the significance of the route, the Yugoslavs demanded that the aircraft land in Belgrade for customs inspection. The aircraft, which belong to the joint Russian-Hungarian air line company, are thought to have gone on to Tirana without landing at Belgrade.

Moreover, an important air route has been established from Sofia to Tirana across Bulgaria. Important supplies and Soviet advisers have been shipped over these two lines to the Albanian government. The two lines were recently provided with Soviet aircraft of the most modern type. If the flights across Yugoslavia are halted, the Albanians will be cut off from direct air traffic with the Cominform countries, although Czech planes could fly to Albania by way of Italy and the line from Sofia could continue over Greece. It is, however, unlikely that the Greek government would permit such air traffic, which would make it possible to build up Albania as a base for Soviet military operations against Greece.

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- 1 -

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